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Harriman reactions:

It diverts us from the main stream of getting the Vientiane people to realize they are up against a tough situation. Another is that these talks would hold up our immediately going to the different personalities, politiaal and also military, even though he hears about it. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ We haven't got time. IF Brown had agreed to this when we proposed it, there would have been time to do it.

We can't offer Phoumi support for a party for himself becuase he is unreliable -- we have found him so -- there is no use getting deeper into bed with him in the future. He is self-centered, self-seeking, cannot take such a commitment in good faith. We can hold it out as a carrot, provided he behaves and only if he changes his own ~~xxx~~ personality.

The highest authority is interested to see whether we can't use this period of Phoumi's illness in a way to build up opposition to him and agreement from some of the more important personalities ~~xxxxxx~~ political and military, to go along with the proposal if Phoumi doesn't play. Again, my concern is we will lose valuable time -- Phoumi will toy with us and then turn around to our disadvantage. I feel he is completely unreliable. He has shown himself to be completely unreliable and that this should be a side issue, rather than the main issue: work in Vientiane to build up a group

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that will play the Souvanna coalition game.

If this had been agreed to be Brown a month ~~xgx~~ ago, I would have been all for it, but we have got a precious ten days time and the chances of this working -- Des himself said was 5 to 1 -- Don't mind their trying it ~~hx~~ but shouldn't let it divert them from President's objective -- to undermine Phoumi and get someone else.

WAH/hbs 3/2/62 - rough draft

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